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NATO ENLARGEMENT FROM THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE

BY

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ABSTRACT

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At the July 1997 summit of NATO leaders in Madrid, with a leading role exercised by the United States, NATO decided to extend invitations for membership to three Central European countries: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. Their official acceptance into the alliance is scheduled currently for 1999. Russia has diplomatically contested the enlargement of NATO since discussions concerning the issue began in 1992. There are many reasons for Russia's concern and at times visceral opposition to NATO enlargement, and this paper will explore these reasons. After discussing the reasons for enlargement, the paper uses published papers, documents and speeches by leading Russian politicians, diplomats, academics and media representatives to explain why Russia thinks NATO is enlarging, and why they are opposed to it. The final section of the paper explores several remaining policy challenges for NATO and the West regarding enlargement. Among these are the accommodations NATO has made to Russia to ameliorate the latter's concerns over the issue, specifically the Founding Act; the issue of the Baltic states regarding eventual membership in NATO and Russia's views on such an action; and, geostrategic concerns with Ukraine and Belarus over the issue of enlargement. The paper concludes that the issue of NATO enlargement is replete with second and third order effects that will challenge NATO and United States policy-makers for several years to come. With expansion that will include East and Central European countries and possibly even the Baltic states, serious consideration needs to be given to whether the alliance will continue to be one of collective defense or if transformation to a multilateral security structure might be more appropriate. Regardless, Russian concerns will need to be addressed. NATO and the West can be sure that Russia will continue to contend any and all initiatives in what it considers to be its sphere of influence.

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NATO ENLARGEMENT FROM THE RUSSIAN PERSPECTIVE

The creation of NATO was a direct threat to the Soviet Union.¹

—Colonel Yuri Andreyev

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization for almost 50 years has strengthened Western Europe and guaranteed a peaceful European continent. Although the alliance balanced Soviet power and hegemony from its formation until the end of the Cold War, it also maintained a balance of power within Western Europe itself. The alliance effectively ensured that no single country could dominate the region as has happened so often in history, most recently as Germany has tried to do twice this century.²

The Soviet Union, and now Russia, does not hold a similar view of the formation and sustainment of NATO. It has and continues to consider the alliance a threat to its national security. In the opinion of many of the Russian policy elite, media, academic institutions and military, NATO has served its purpose and, with the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, can claim no bona fide justification for its continued existence. Georgiy Arbatov, honorary director of the United States and Canada Institute in Moscow, contends that "...with the disappearance of the enemy the North Atlantic alliance has lost its 'raison

d'être,' that is, the reason for its existence."³

Nevertheless, NATO, according to the United States' National Security Strategy, "remains the anchor of American engagement in Europe and the lynchpin of transatlantic security."⁴ It has fulfilled its intent and will continue in large measure to function as a means of ensuring United States involvement in the affairs and security of Europe. This involvement is in the United States' strategic interest and is the first strategic priority of the Clinton Administration. "We must help foster a peaceful, undivided, democratic Europe. When Europe is stable and at peace, America is more secure. When Europe prospers, so does America."⁵

At the July 1997 summit of NATO leaders in Madrid, with a leading role exercised by the United States, NATO decided to extend invitations for membership to three Central European countries: Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary. These countries, which along with Slovakia constitute the Visegrad countries, were once part of the Warsaw Pact and have achieved significant gains toward developing democratic forms of government and market economies. They have been deemed to have met NATO's general criteria for membership, which includes full democratic control over their armed forces, settlement of all

territorial problems with their neighbors, and resolution of any ethnic disputes within their territories.⁶ Their official acceptance into the alliance is scheduled currently for 1999, which also is the 50th anniversary of the founding of the NATO alliance.

Russia has diplomatically contested the enlargement of NATO since discussions concerning the issue began in 1992. There are many reasons for Russia's concern and at times visceral opposition to NATO enlargement, and this paper will explore these reasons. After discussing the reasons for NATO enlargement, I will use published papers, documents and speeches by leading Russian politicians, diplomats, academics, and media representatives to explain why Russia thinks NATO is enlarging. The next section will examine why the Russians oppose enlargement. I will then conclude by examining several remaining challenges and policy issues for NATO and the United States over the issue of enlargement.

WHY ENLARGE NATO?

The 1997 National Security Strategy of the United States indicates that NATO is enlarging to strengthen East and Central Europe by taking in new members from Europe's new democracies.

As the principal advocate of enlarging NATO, the United States will be able to strengthen and adapt its security relationships in the interest of constructive engagement with new and old NATO members. Enlarging NATO enables the alliance to continue to play a major role in European security and ensure America's military and political presence on the European continent into the 21st century.⁷ Furthermore, "NATO enlargement will not be aimed at replacing one division in Europe with a new one; rather, its purpose [will be] to enhance the security of all European states."⁸

United States Secretary of State Madelaine Albright, in her opening statement before the Carnegie Roundtable Discussion at the Carnegie Center in Moscow, May 1997, said that NATO is becoming an "organization of like-minded democracies united to meet the challenge of the future." She also indicated that if NATO did not enlarge, old dividing lines would re-emerge in the heart of Europe and that confidence would disintegrate in many new democracies. A new destabilizing "scramble for security" would ensue, and an arms race by former Warsaw Pact members to secure themselves would surely develop.⁹

There has been much discussion about dividing lines in Europe--those resulting from the formation of NATO and the Warsaw

Pact, those formed by cultural differences, by religious preferences, and so forth. An enlarged NATO might lead to the establishment of a European security system designed to build a Europe without dividing lines. NATO presently is the only institution capable of successfully addressing security threats in Europe. Membership in the alliance is therefore seen by many emerging democratic states as a source of security in a time of uncertainty and concern as they continue to develop. Former Ambassador to the United Nations Jean Kirkpatrick rather succinctly acknowledges this desire when she writes that NATO is enlarging "to provide a security shield behind which the free institutions of those geographically vulnerable European democracies can strike deep roots and thrive."¹⁰ Central and East Europeans have little choice but to actively seek NATO membership as a means of addressing their immediate and long-term security concerns.¹¹

According to Secretary Albright, significant public majorities and every major political party in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary support membership in NATO.¹² According to Czech Republic senator Michael Zantovsky, approval stands at two to one in recent public opinion polls, and is growing. In Poland, polls show an overwhelming public majority of 90% in

favor of NATO membership.¹³ Finally, in Hungary a public referendum held in November 1997, with 50% of the electorate voting, indicated that 85% of the Hungarian people support their country's initiative to join NATO.¹⁴ Indeed, "from Tallinn to Ljubljana, it is accepted that NATO enlargement is a fitting conclusion to the Cold War, an integrative, unifying step in European affairs and a key move toward guaranteeing Euro-Atlantic security."¹⁵

Another reason for NATO enlargement, according to Christoph Bertram of NATO Review, is that with the enemy gone, NATO had to define a new, cohesive purpose for itself, along with an institutional framework to underpin security. This purpose would also maintain what has been and continues to be an essential condition of stability in Europe: the institutional involvement of the United States. With today's vague threats to European security, were it not for the presence and influence of the United States, there would be no "hierarchy of powers to impose a structure of order." NATO has become the backbone of European security, an anchor of stability.¹⁶

Having examined the views of many in the West as to why NATO is enlarging, it is now essential that we consider NATO enlargement from Russia's perspective. In several considerations

Russia's and the West's views coincide, and in many areas they are diametrically opposed.

WHY RUSSIA THINKS NATO IS ENLARGING

Russia's Council on Foreign and Defense Policy is a working group coordinated by S.A. Karaganov and consists of such notable foreign policy experts as A.G Arbatov, A.V. Kortunov, A.K. Pushkov and S.M. Rogov. In early 1996, in a section of the journal Comparative Strategy called *View from Russia*, the council indicated that NATO is enlarging to preserve the viability of the Atlantic Alliance. In addition, enlargement will reinforce NATO as an instrument to keep the United States in the European security system.¹⁷ These reasons are, of course, completely consistent with both NATO's justification for enlargement and the national security strategy of the United States. This perhaps reflects a more mature, learned consideration of enlargement on the part of Russia at large. In addition, liberals in Moscow believe the principal reason for NATO enlargement is the acute need for the alliance to find a new mission for itself after the end of the cold war; in other words, enlarge or perish.¹⁸ Among other institutions in Russia though, including the media and the military, the view toward NATO enlargement is not as

dispassionate.

Many in the media, for example, believe that Boris Yeltsin committed an unrecoverable error in foreign diplomacy when he gave the green light to NATO expansion in August 1993 during his first official visit to Poland. He agreed in public that Poland's joining NATO did not run counter to the interests of Russia. A joint communique on this visit, read at a news conference with Yeltsin and Lech Walesa, confirmed Russia's understanding of Warsaw's stance. The Polish, of course, considered this concession by Russia the most significant aspect of Yeltsin's visit. Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Andrey Kozyrev, stated "Russia will have no objection if NATO does not take an aggressive stand in respect of Russia. This [Poland joining NATO] is a matter of Poland and NATO."¹⁹

These statements, picked up immediately by the world press, were subsequently qualified, refuted and criticized by the Kremlin and the Russian mass media. But, the damage had been done. The statements were perceived to indicate the Kremlin's consent to Poland's membership in NATO, and that the nature of Polish-NATO relations should cause the West to lose its reservations based on fears of offending Russia.²⁰

Regarding the Central and East European motives for NATO membership, Georgiy Arbatov indicates that these countries want to be members of Western structures and thereby consider themselves to be full Europeans. Furthermore, Russian instability—its weak economic position and feeble leadership is in fact driving former client states away, into the open arms of the West.²¹ An additional incentive for aspiring countries is the belief that their country's "shortest route" to Western technology and markets, and economic aid, lay through NATO.²²

Many Russian foreign policy experts believe Washington saw NATO enlargement as a good opportunity to breathe new life into the alliance and break the trend toward European autonomy on the continent. At the same time, they believe European NATO members' capitals, primarily Bonn, Paris and London, expect to strengthen their positions both within the alliance and in certain regions as a result of the admission of new countries, which are eager to upgrade their military equipment. In fact, arms sales are seen as a fundamental reason for NATO enlargement and the new member countries are potential lucrative arms sales markets for United States and West European arms manufacturers. According to a recent Moscow newspaper article regarding arms sales, "...U.S. arms lobbyists are trying to link the ratification of the documents on

the new members' admission to the alliance and their purchase of U.S. arms." This initiative by U.S. arms manufacturers, naturally, did not please Europeans, who want to profit in these new markets as well.²³

What of the West's strategic intentions? Andrei Kortunov writes that the West is

consolidating its victory in the cold war and is filling the vacuum, or buffer zone, created between Russia and NATO as a result of the withdrawal of Russian troops from Central and East Europe, by absorbing former Soviet satellites while keeping Russia isolated.²⁴

Moreover, Arbatov contends that, at least according to Russian nationalists, NATO enlargement is part of a long-term Western strategy aimed at facilitating a gradual revision of the neutral status of such countries as Finland, Sweden and Austria. This, coupled with the perceived unwillingness to allow Russia access to emerging Pacific nations, leads many hard-line Russians to believe that NATO enlargement is a component of an encirclement policy by the West toward Russia. In other words, by isolating Russia the West can prevent it from achieving its former Great Power status.²⁵ NATO, it would appear, has yielded to the temptation of taking advantage of Moscow's temporary weakness.²⁶

The issue of Germany and its perceived motivations for NATO enlargement warrants mention. Aleksandar Fomenko, writing in the Review of International Affairs, indicates that Berlin is interested in NATO enlargement to the east because of the eventual "greater Europeanization of the alliance," and the gradual "expulsion of American globalists" from European politics.²⁷ All countries currently aspiring to alliance membership are within the historical, territorial and economic boundaries of the German sphere of influence. It is also expected that enlargement will enhance Germany's economic ties with Russia.²⁸ Russia has vast amounts of natural resources that a thriving economy such as Germany's needs. Given the historical precedent demonstrated this century by Germany in its attempts at regional—even global—hegemony, it is not difficult to understand Fomenko's point of view.

Russian perceptions of why NATO is enlarging run the gamut from mature consideration of the process in light of the end of the Cold War to a mechanism that ensures United States involvement in European affairs to betrayal and mistrust and an attempt to keep Russia down. In the view of many, the West has grand designs on the eventual restructuring of the whole of the European continent—East, Central and West. Given this range of

thought on why Russia thinks NATO is enlarging, the next section will address why specifically Russia opposes enlargement.

WHY RUSSIA OPPOSES NATO ENLARGEMENT

Russia's objection to NATO Enlargement is deep-rooted, varied and touches all aspects of its domestic and global existence. It is generated by nearly all institutions in Russia—political, information, military, academic and economic. In general, the arguments against enlargement may be grouped into three broad categories of concern: security and stability, fear of isolation and domestic politics and reform.

SECURITY AND STABILITY

Yuri Davydov of the Institute of USA and Canadian Studies in Moscow best summarizes the security and stability concerns of Russia. He writes that "Russia still views East and Central Europe as its sphere of influence, largely attributable to the fact that it is from this region that Russia was invaded by the Teutons, Poles, Swedes, French and Germans."²⁹ In addition, it is from this region of Europe that two world wars and the Cold War began. This cuts to the essence of the issue with Russia regarding NATO enlargement: for the last 300 years, since the

reign of Peter the Great, it has attempted to secure its periphery by establishing a zone of security around itself. Any encroachment into this zone is cause for alarm and steadfast opposition.

In this buffer zone no foreign forces and no foreign alliances or military blocs are supposed to operate. It is essentially an "exclusion zone," but to Moscow it constitutes "a sphere of special relations and privileged interests."³⁰ Furthermore, it is an area in which Russia believes it determines the foreign and security policy of such countries that find themselves in this zone, which include East and Central Europe and Central Asia. Therefore, by joining NATO or allowing Western forces on their territory, Belarus, Finland, Georgia, Latvia or Poland encourage the emergence of a direct military threat to Russia.³¹ The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact has left in its wake a band of independent countries that might facilitate the eastward movement of the boundary of its former Cold War nemesis to the border of the mother country—Russia.

This is the view of the majority of nationalists in Russia—that their country is being pushed out of its traditional sphere of influence, and a potentially hostile bloc is getting close to its western borders. Enlargement gives NATO a better

geostrategic position against Russia in case of possible conflict. Nationalists also consider NATO to be a defensive alliance whose purpose is to oppose a common enemy, rather than a collective security alliance, which is indeed what enlargement may force it to become.³² This view reflects an inherent distrust of NATO as Russia's traditional Cold War enemy as well as a fear of being excluded from the new Europe. It establishes new dividing lines in Europe, and in the view of many hard-liners will lead to future permanent basing of NATO troops on the territory of new members.³³

To what can we attribute this thinking? Robert Legvold, professor of political science at Columbia University, postulates that "for many Russians, the tendency to detect evil intent lurking behind objectionable Western initiatives remains strong."³⁴ When the issue of NATO enlargement arises, an uncomfortably large percentage of politicians, significant portions of the media and some parts of the policy-making community instinctively view Western policies as ill advised and insensitive to Russian concerns. In addition, these policies are aimed specifically at diminishing or endangering Russia. What is striking about this is that these views seem to be in contravention to the formal position, based on the pronouncements

of its leaders, that Russia no longer faces an explicit threat from any particular state or group of states. This includes any of the great powers.³⁵ The reaction to enlargement, then, can almost be characterized as spiteful—"we just don't like it because."

Russia's campaign against NATO enlargement to the east is also based on classic geopolitical-strategic arguments: that to extend NATO to East and Central Europe could undermine the existing strategic balance created by the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE). The treaty, signed in November 1990 by the 22 NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, places numerical limitations on tanks, artillery, armored combat vehicles, combat aircraft and attack helicopters-known collectively as treaty-limited equipment (TLE)—for each alliance, or "group" in an area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains.³⁶ Russian officials contend that the full implementation of the CFE Treaty and the demise of the Warsaw Pact have resulted in an asymmetry in the balance of forces. Moscow further maintains that under the treaty Russia is currently allowed less TLE than NATO, and this disparity would only grow if NATO expands eastward.³⁷

Colonel Jeffrey McCausland, writing in Arms Control Today, indicates the flaws in the Russian position regarding the CFE Treaty. Some of these flaws include the fact that Moscow's balance-of-force comparisons are based on a Cold War security environment—pitting alliance against alliance—that no longer exists. "In the new era of cooperative security, as indicated in the NATO-Russia Founding Act, 'NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries.'"³⁸ In addition, the Russian perspective ignores NATO's stated desire to negotiate lower force levels as an objective of the recent Treaty adaptation talks—involving all of the current 30 states-parties, which includes Russia. Last, NATO currently maintains force levels that are far below its entitlements in every TLE category, and with the inclusion of the new NATO members these levels would still be below the alliance's entitlement before enlargement.³⁹

Russia also maintains that enlargement would destroy the status quo in Europe as defined in 1990 between Gorbachev for the USSR and the four NATO powers in the agreement on the unification of Germany.⁴⁰ While the Russians may perceive enlargement as a violation of the "Two-Plus-Four" agreement, recent NATO proposals to adjust the treaty address Moscow's concerns. These concerns mainly involve "stationed forces," which are the forces of

another state-party on a country's soil. NATO proposes to replace existing bloc-to-bloc and zonal limits on TLE with "national" and "territorial" limits whereby the total of a nation's own equipment plus permanently stationed hardware would be limited by the new territorial ceiling. The NATO proposal would also add a clear definition of so-called "temporary deployments" for military exercises and create a new stabilization zone encompassing the Visegrad states, Kaliningrad, Belarus and Ukraine—where greater restrictions would apply for stationed forces.⁴¹ Furthermore, U.S. Secretary of State Madelaine Albright addressed the issue of CFE by indicating that United States CFE proposals will ensure each new NATO state maintains only those capabilities needed for legitimate individual or collective security needs. In essence, no new NATO member, according to Albright, can serve as a staging area for a potential attack against Russia.⁴²

The issue seems to be that enlargement has resurrected traditional and deep-rooted Russian feelings of insecurity. Furthermore, Russia risks being marginalized in European politics, reduced to a "semi-European, peripheral country," with only limited access to all-European affairs. The five-year record of post-Soviet Russia's foreign policy sheds light on the

contradictory logic of Russia's reaction to enlargement. The introduction to Russia and Europe, a recent book edited by Vladimir Baranovsky, who is a Russian and leader of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Project on Russia's Security Agenda, properly summarizes the Russian reaction to enlargement from the standpoint of security and stability by writing

The excessive euphoria, enthusiasm, hopes, illusions and misperceptions of the initial post-cold war period have given way to calculations, statements and actions aimed at promoting Russia as an influential international actor. Deliberations on Russia's "great powerness", "special responsibilities", and "spheres of national interest" have become a new obsession—sometimes evolving into arrogance, assertiveness and what is clearly perceived as neo-imperial inclinations. ...[T]his tendency has been most clearly manifested by Russia's attitude towards the issue of the enlargement of NATO membership....⁴³

FEAR OF ISOLATION

Much of Russia's fear of isolation from Europe as a result of NATO enlargement stems largely from the conviction that the Western powers have simply deceived Russia. This deception began with the West reneging on the promise that no NATO troops would appear outside of the former borders of the Federal Republic of Germany (i.e., West Germany) following the reunification of Germany. In addition, assurances made by then President George

Bush, Secretary of State James Baker and Chancellor Helmut Kohl were to observe Russia's geopolitical interests, consider its security concerns, and not to threaten these concerns, according to former Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev.⁴⁴

Similarly, enlargement of NATO threatens not so much Russia's interests "but Russia's fragile post-Soviet international identity, according to which Russia remains a great power worthy of the mantle of the USSR or Imperial Russia."⁴⁵ Indeed, according to Flora Lewis, "the heart of the matter for most Russian elite...concerns feelings, perceptions about Russia's role as a great power [and] its need for the respect that it is due."⁴⁶ Yuri Davydov of the Institute of USA and Canada proposes a similar view when he indicates most Russian's main concern is not that NATO expansion threatens Russia's security interests in any specific way but the *idea* of expansion itself.⁴⁷

According to Taras Kuzio, writing in European Security, the legacy of Soviet influence is still a major factor that "permeates its power ministries and diplomatic community that has been allowed to grow in recent years." Furthermore, Russia's overall hostility to NATO enlargement rests more on the issue of coming to terms with loss of empire and Great Power status as well as inheriting the psychology of the former Soviet Union

within its ministries.⁴⁸

Tatiana Parkhalina, Head of the Department of West Europe at the Russian Academy of Sciences, considers Russian opposition to NATO enlargement in a similar light when she writes that the problem of interaction with the West is psychological. Western interaction is heavily influenced by Russian cultural tradition and for the past three centuries this interaction and its potential deleterious effect on Russian culture has generated significant social tension in Russia. Russia fears the negative influence of Western values on its society and culture, and this limits the scope for cooperation.⁴⁹

In the final analysis it appears that Russia "wants to have its cake and eat it, too." It has collectively decided it does not like the prospect of NATO enlargement because it will feel left out of the grand European scheme of things. It denounces enlargement because it will create new dividing lines in Europe, "with Russia on the wrong side."⁵⁰ Yet it wants to be an active participant on the continent, but only if it is able to "call the shots." Russia does not view NATO as a security alliance that will foster and enhance the development of democracy and market economies while at the same time providing a measure of security to the new, fledgling countries of East and Central Europe.

Rather, it persists on thinking of NATO as the enemy, clearly imbued with ulterior motives and determined to keep Russia down. Perhaps Vladimir Baranovsky best summarize the fickle nature of this position:

For Russia, Europe was both alluring and frightening, tantalizing and disturbing, radiating light and incarnating darkness. Russia was anxious to absorb Europe's vitality—and to ward off its contaminating effects; to become a fully-fledged member of the European family of nations—and to remain removed from it; to enjoy its courtesies and even its devotion but at the same time to inspire fear and trepidation. Indeed, the whole history of Russia is cast in this contradictory feeling...⁵¹

DOMESTIC POLITICS AND REFORM

An analysis of the political situation inside Russia concerning NATO enlargement must begin by considering the major political groups. Liberal reformers believe first that successful development of relations with the West is inseparable from the process of liberal reform in domestic politics and economics. They advocate integration with Western economic and political institutions such as NATO, the EU and the Group of 7 leading industrial nations, which Russia has recently joined. These reformers, then, see NATO enlargement as a logical step toward European integration and an issue with which Russia must come to grips.⁵²

Regarding military reform, liberals also think that Boris Yeltsin has failed to initiate any meaningful changes while desperately preserving all the worst features of the Soviet army: its size, structure, insularity, over-bureaucratization, corruption, immunity from any real civilian control, etc. This failure to implement concrete reform in the military has resulted in Moscow losing out in the race to join the West "to its more dynamic and reform-oriented neighbors," namely Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic.⁵³

Anti-Westerners want to pursue the goal of reviving "Russian grandeur" by renouncing the Western model of development in Europe. They consider participation in the Partnership for Peace program, which Russia joined in January 1995, as a betrayal of the country's national interests. NATO enlargement in their view merely represents the machinations of anti-Russian forces in the West, relegates Russia to a second rate power and is an insult to its national dignity. Finally, forging stronger relationships in NATO is "tantamount to capitulation."⁵⁴

Moderate nationals in Russia believe that Russia must strike a balance between its interests in East and Central Europe with those of NATO and the West. They have a more realistic view of

political realities in Europe, namely that enlargement of NATO will proceed with or without Russian acceptance. In their opinion Russia's joining Partnership for Peace, for example, and further cooperation with NATO represent a deal, an accommodation to the West in exchange for cooperation in other political and economic interests, such as the European Union.⁵⁵ They recognize, but not necessarily agree with, the motivations for enlargement on the part of NATO and the United States.

There are considerable current economic challenges in Russia as it transitions from a planned to a market economy. Interestingly, this economic transition "increases nationalism in inverse proportion to the effective control of the process on the part of the political institutions."⁵⁶ In other words, the less satisfied the public is with the its general quality of life as the Russian economy reforms, the more intense becomes the nationalist, and hence anti-Western, feelings. This, of course, has an effect on the general acceptance of Western initiatives such as NATO enlargement. The present economic challenge, to which the politicians cannot adequately respond, according to Parkhalina, makes enlargement a convenient platform to vent frustration. "Some politicians believe they can generate a national consensus [against the West] without addressing the real

domestic problems in the political and economic field."⁵⁷

In the midst of this economic reform the West has merely exacerbated an already bleak situation by placing an additional economic burden on Russia with pursuing NATO enlargement. The costs for Russia of East and Central European entry into NATO, according to Davydov, are considerable. The approach of the world's largest military bloc up to Russia's borders necessitates a reconsideration of all of Russia's defense concepts, the structure of its armed forces, the installation of additional infrastructure, redeployment of troops, and changes to operational plans and training. Enlargement places a strain on the military budget at the expense of some urgently needed domestic programs. Furthermore, military reform would place the military itself in jeopardy and social tension in the armed forces would increase.⁵⁸ This view, of course, envisions NATO as a threat and not a purely defensive alliance and is consistent with more nationalist thinking.

The timing of enlargement, from Kortunov's point of view, could thus be better. By proceeding now with NATO enlargement demonstrates that the alliance is insensitive to the difficulties of the domestic political and economic transition on-going in Russia.⁵⁹ This transition, of course, is still in its nascent

stages and risks being slowed or even stalled by the inclusion of East and Central European countries in NATO.

REMAINING CHALLENGES AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

A major area of concern over the enlargement of NATO is not only how enlargement affects Russia's relations with NATO and the West, but equally important, how it affects Russia's relations with other organizations and countries. The Theses of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, published in 1996, recommends that the strategic and long-term goals of Russian policy should be to counterbalance the decision to enlarge NATO by enhancing cooperation with other organizations. In addition, bilateral cooperation with European powers should be strengthened.⁶⁰ Russia will likely make Europe the central focus of its foreign policy in place of America, largely because much of the groundwork has already begun. Russia trades more with the European Union than it does with America, and the EU provides more aid to Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) than does America (60% of all aid to Russia, as opposed to 13% from the United States).⁶¹

Driving Russian foreign policy toward Europe may not be the United States' biggest concern, though. George Kennan, an

opponent of enlarging NATO, has indicated that NATO enlargement may redirect Russian foreign policy in directions not to the liking of the United States.⁶² In fact, NATO enlargement "has turned Russia from a potential active partner with the United States in dealing with China and 'rogue' states like Iran and Iraq to a potential leader of a coalition opposing U.S. hegemony that includes both Iran and China."

The United States and NATO have concluded several policy initiatives in the since May 1997 that have been aimed at accommodating Russia and moderating their opposition to NATO enlargement. The foremost of these policy initiatives is the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Cooperation and Security Between NATO and the Russian Federation, issued in Paris on 27 May 1997. The Founding Act climaxed months of intense diplomacy between Russia and NATO, aimed at calming strong Russian objections to NATO enlargement.⁶³ This Act essentially gives Russia a voice in the security issues on which NATO acts. Among other things, the Act makes it clear that NATO does not pose a threat to Russia, and NATO allies emphasize that they have no intention to deploy nuclear weapons on the territory of the new NATO members.⁶⁴ The issue of nuclear weapons and their possible deployment to the new NATO countries has been a major issue with

Russia. Writing in the Brookings Review, Raymond Garthoff indicates that Russia may have needed to rely more on a strategy of flexible response with "planned early recourse to nuclear weapons as its only possible counter to a potential Western military threat."⁶⁵

The Founding Act also established a NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council (PJC), the principal task of which is the formation of a high level of trust, unity of goals, and experience of consultations between NATO and Russia. The PJC will meet regularly at several levels—Ambassadorial and Ministerial, military representatives and Chiefs of Defense/General Staff, and at experts-level. Consultations in the PJC will cover a broad range of political or security-related matters. Based on these consultations, NATO will strive to develop joint initiatives on which NATO and Russia "would agree to speak or act in parallel."⁶⁶ And, "once consensus has been reached in the consultations,"⁶⁷ NATO will be able to take joint decisions and joint actions, such as in peacekeeping operations and crisis management.

Of the several critics of the Founding Act, perhaps the most notable is former secretary of state Dr. Henry Kissinger. A longtime supporter of NATO enlargement, he is "gravely concerned

that the so-called Founding Act between Russia and NATO...seeks to reconcile Russia by diluting the Atlantic Alliance into a U.N.-style system of collective security.⁶⁸ In his view, the distinction between an alliance and a system of collective security is significant in that with the former it is "one for all and all for one." With the latter, when all participants agree on a particular issue there is no need for it; when they split it is useless, particularly when the nation posing the threat participates in the consultation process. Most significantly, Russia can always insist that all NATO actions, even in the traditional NATO theater of operations, will have to be reviewed by institutions in which Russia has a seat. "...[T]he Founding Act threatens to dilute NATO by grafting onto existing NATO institutions an elaborate and convoluted machinery for consultations with Russia at every level of the alliance."⁶⁹

The Founding Act specifically states that "[p]rovisions of this Act do not provide NATO or Russia, in any way, with a right of veto over the actions of the other nor do they infringe upon or restrict the rights of NATO or Russia to independent decision-making and action."⁷⁰ While this may be true, as Kissinger points out "...[e]xperience with NATO deliberations suggests that in all but the most exclusive cases the deliberative role of NATO

will be overshadowed by the Russian in the ante-room (if indeed this is where he stays).⁷¹ The Russians, by mere fact of their permanent presence in NATO, will likely have significant impact on its deliberative process. LTG Viktor Mikhaylovich Zavarin, head of the Russian military mission to NATO, most clearly states the significance of the Act: "We will now stand up constructively and explicitly for Russia's interests and security. And if necessary, occasionally even in a tough way."⁷²

A policy issue that perhaps looms as the most likely flashpoint regarding NATO enlargement is the status of the Baltic countries—Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. These nations have had the historical misfortune of being part of central or even western Europe but geographically part of eastern Europe. If NATO were to expand to include these three countries, it would drive Russia into an "implacable hostility," while assuming a military commitment that would be indefensible. However, if NATO does not include the Baltic countries, it could "leave adrift and unprotected nations which are clearly part of Europe and Western civilization more generally."⁷³

From a Russian perspective, the role of Finland during the Cold War may provide the most relevant model for the new Eastern Europe. Like Finland, some countries could be politically

independent and militarily neutral, but still fall within the Russian security zone or sphere of influence. "This is very likely the Russian intention in regard to the Baltic states...."⁷⁴ Furthermore, "Russia will...now likely see the Finlandization of the Baltic States...as its necessary compensation for the NATOization of Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary."⁷⁵

While addressing the Russian intentions regarding the Baltic states, what of the Baltic states' intentions themselves? The simple fact is that all three countries desire membership in NATO as swiftly as possible and view the outcome of the Madrid summit as disappointing. Furthermore, they see Russia's intentions regarding their countries as irrelevant. Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas said in July that Moscow "should remember that the USSR ceased to exist long ago. Lithuania has never been part of the former Soviet Union. It was occupied and annexed."⁷⁶ He considers Lithuania to be a sovereign country and therefore entitled to decide its future, including security, by itself.⁷⁷

These statements, which are reflected in all three Baltic states, contrast significantly with Russia's view. The deputy chairman of the Russian State Duma's security committee, Sergey Boskholov, considers it inadmissible that the Baltic countries should join NATO.⁷⁸ Clearly this is a significant point of

contention and one that NATO will need to come to grips with in the near future. The United States needs to decide how it will handle this issue—will it back the Baltic states in their desire for true independence and sovereignty, or neglect the issue of NATO membership for them and appease Russia?

Of additional geostrategic concern is the country of Belarus, which is situated between Russia, the Baltic countries, Poland and Ukraine. Belarus adamantly opposes NATO enlargement, in part for fears of becoming the new dividing line between East and West. "Belarus, lying astride a historical invasion route and having suffered the most casualties per capita of any state in World War II, is obviously concerned not to be the site of future conflict."⁷⁹ In February 1995, President Aleksandr Lukashenko halted Belarussian compliance with the CFE Treaty, claiming NATO encroachment onto its borders. Lukashenko has become increasingly volatile. He has proposed a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, to consist of Belarus, Ukraine, the Baltic states, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. At the same time he has openly invited Russian tactical and strategic nuclear weapons back to Belarus if NATO expands. These seemingly irrational actions by Lukashenko are increasing the desires of Poland and the Baltic states to join the alliance.⁸⁰

Ukraine also poses significant strategic concerns for NATO as the issue of enlargement proceeds. For quite some time Ukraine opposed NATO's enlargement principally because it feared a potential Russian backlash, but national leaders in Kiev have ultimately concluded that enlargement can be to their advantage. Since the alliance, with the inclusion of Poland and Hungary, will soon border on Ukraine, it is clearly in NATO's vital interests that Ukraine survive as an independent, viable, sovereign state.⁸¹ Having concluded a separate agreement with Ukraine, NATO appears to have taken concrete steps in this direction. However,

"[t]he main problem for the West is how to make it clear to Ukraine that the country's viability ultimately depends just as much on what the Ukrainians accomplish at home, particularly in economic reform. Maintaining a balance between sustaining Ukraine politically and simultaneously urging the country's leaders to take charge of their own affairs will not be easy."⁸²

The issue, then, of NATO enlargement is replete with second and third order effects that will challenge NATO and United States' policy makers for several years to come. "As important as it is to avoid feeding Russian misperceptions of a Western military threat, it is even more important to avoid feeding valid Russian perceptions that their legitimate security interests are

not being given appropriate weight."⁸³ This is not to say that NATO and the West should concede to every Russian demand and not act in the best interests of NATO. With expansion that will include East and Central European countries and possibly even the Baltic states, though, serious consideration needs to be given to whether the alliance will continue to be one of collective defense or if transformation to a multilateral security structure might be more appropriate.

In any event, Russian concerns will need to be addressed. It remains to be seen if the current established mechanisms of involvement—Permanent Joint Council, Partnership for Peace, the Founding Act, etc.—can pacify Russia while the alliance continues to expand its membership and its role. Much will depend not only on Russia's view of NATO and NATO enlargement but on Russia's view of itself as a great power and a European player. Whatever the view, NATO and the West can be sure Russia will contest any and all NATO initiatives in what it considers to be its sphere of influence. In some respects, Russia today resembles Germany during the Weimar period of the 1920's:

"A country which believes itself to be temporarily weak and a victim of historic injustices, a state which may be tempted to erase some of these historic injustices when the opportunity occurs. The policy is opportunistic, incoherent and based on fundamentally flawed instincts. But it will remain Russia's policy

for years to come."⁸⁴

Patience, honesty and a frank exchange of ideas and concerns are what is needed now. NATO and Russia need to develop and foster a relationship built on trust, a relationship that will lead to stability and mutual confidence well into the future. Given its situation and national psyche, this will be more difficult for Russia to achieve. In addition, developing and maintaining this type of relationship will require significant effort by NATO and the West. Nevertheless, a firm commitment by all is essential to future progress and stability in East and Central Europe. Long-held feelings of mistrust and deceit need to be cast aside in favor of a spirit of cooperation and engagement.

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